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Local tradition and re-formation of (sacred) space: border sanctuaries as centres of resonance

This project deals with 'Border sanctuaries' as markers of a new territorial order as well as of a traditional 'religious landscape' throughout Antiquity. Situated at the very periphery of different communities, these cult areas were used as local centers by the rural society for cultural, economic, and sometimes even legal purposes, but most of all for common cult and public events often with theater performances and probably sports competitions. The formation of a (new) sacral landscape delimited by sanctuaries on the borders of city territories, provinces, civitates etc. forms a basis for studies on **horizontal (communities)** and **diagonal (landscape, architecture, borders)** axes of resonance. An example for such sacred spaces is the Martberg sanctuary on the border between the new Roman Civitas Treverorum and the new province of Germania Superior.

Core hypotheses:

1) Public cults played a significant role in rural areas and might be important in establishing horizontal and vertical relationships. 2) 'Border sanctuaries' for public cults and related events could also mark and demonstrate a new territorial order aside from previous religious and political relations. 3) Especially in the Gallic and German Provinces of the Roman Empire these 'Border sanctuaries', normally in the form of monumental temples and other large buildings like theatres, had a special function for the Romanisation of traditional tribal communities. 4) Especially the recurring festivals were often connected with rituals that on the one hand served to strengthen the corporate identity of the rural communities and on the other hand to establish a connection to the empire and its rulers.

Sources and methods:

Methodologically, research will analyse the construction and decoration of sanctuaries and their environment marking a sacral or political boundary, as well as the religious practices that took place there, from the point of view of resonant self–world relations. Are there, in addition, detectable differences between the religious practices of men and women belonging to different groups of worshippers in border sanctuaries? The major aim of the dissertation – or, ideally, regionally differentiated dissertations – is to analyze the construction and decoration of sanctuaries marking a sacral or political boundary, as well as the religious practices that took place there, and for which we have archaeological or epigraphic evidence, from the point of view of resonant self–world relations.

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